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# Amazon Removes Free Speech 'Exercise' Featuring 3-D Printed Gun Code Book



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Amazon has removed a book from its platform containing little more than computer code.

While details about why Amazon removed the book are limited, [the function of the code](#), to 3-D print a plastic gun that fires real bullets—called The Liberator—appears to be the most likely cause.

What we know for sure about the decision is that the “book was removed for violating our content guidelines,” as an Amazon spokesperson confirmed. But the spokesperson declined to elaborate on which guidelines the book violated.

As a U.S district judge in the state of Washington is in the final days of deciding whether to remove an injunction preventing the creator of the code, Cody Wilson, from publishing it online, the removal of the book could have far-reaching consequences.

“The scope of the injunction is to prevent Cody Wilson and Defense Distributed from publishing the files online,” said Ilya Shapiro, a senior fellow in constitutional studies at the Cato Institute. “If the files are available in hard copy or book it is different.”

Included in the Amazon [terms](#) provided by the spokesperson are pornography, offensive content, illegal and infringing content, the use of certain public domain materials and poor customer service experience.

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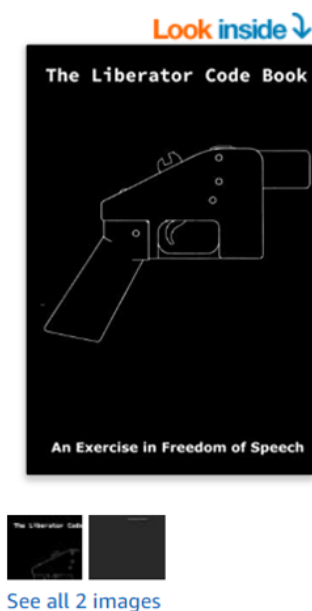
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For his part, Wilson further clarified that the 3-D-printed gun code was “committed to the public domain under an express open source license in 2013” and added that he has “no problems at all” with the book being published on Amazon.



A screen capture from the now-deleted book order page on Amazon. AMAZON

The \$20 book, titled *The Liberator Code Book: An Exercise in the Freedom of Speech*, received a mere seven reviews on Amazon before being removed from the site. But one of the reviews, written by a “verified user,” describes the potential implications of the book:

“It doesn’t really matter which side you fall on when it comes to guns. The fact that this book exists forces you to think about how far are we willing to go with gun control as it strays into suppression of free speech.”

Published by a C J Awelow, the book follows in a tradition of releasing in book form code deemed dangerous by the U.S. government. In June 1995, MIT Press published a book containing the code written by Phil Zimmermann for PGP email encryption—then considered a munition.

As specifically relates to the Liberator code book, while the software version of Zimmermann’s code was deemed a munition and legally prevented from export for years, the book version was able to freely circulate. Even today, as the software version of the PGP code is one of the most widely used email encryption tools, Amazon’s own website makes the book [available](#) at collector’s prices.

In an interview with *Forbes*, Zimmerman shared his thoughts on Cody Wilson’s code: “I reluctantly concede that he should be able to publish his blueprints. If he

were publishing blueprints for body armor I would enthusiastically endorse him for doing this.”

Offering a less measured stance is Andrew Patrick, media director of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence. Patrick called 3-D-printed firearms “assassination guns,” that are not covered by either the Second Amendment protection of the right to bear arms or the First Amendment protections of free speech.

“You cannot yell ‘fire’ in a crowded theater because it endangers the general public,” he said. “Undetectable, untraceable 3-D-printed guns are equally—if not more—dangerous.”

Further caution regarding the potential dangers of the 3-D-printable gun files came from Zimmermann himself, who protested nuclear armament in the 1980s and is concerned that legally permitting the proliferation of the files could set a dangerous precedent.

“There’s a tendency for people to try to adhere to a purist set of principles,” said Zimmermann, warning about the potential of files that encode rapidly improving gene editing techniques called [CRISPR](#) to create a disease that can’t be cured.

“If you take the position that anything should be publishable under free speech, then when everybody dies of some exotic manmade virus we can all take deep satisfaction that we adhered to our truest principles of free speech.”

*I report on how blockchain and cryptocurrencies are being adopted by enterprises and the broader business community. My coverage includes the use of cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, Ethereum and Ripple, and extends to non-cryptocurrency applications of blockchain in finance... **MORE***

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## How To Take Control Of Your Debt



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There are some aspects of your finances that you can't control — like the stock market, and others you can—like debt. Making a few smart lifestyle decisions and maintaining some discipline can keep it under control.

While debt can be easily abused, it isn't necessarily bad. Borrowing to pay for a home, for example, can be good. You gain equity as you pay down your loan or mortgage. Also, your mortgage interest can be deductible on your income taxes.

On the other hand, relying on credit card debt to sustain your lifestyle is like playing the lottery to fund retirement. The math is overwhelmingly against you.



A budget can help you watch expenses and divert more money to saving or paying off bills. ISTOCK

## Do The Math

Credit cards offer instant gratification for people who want something they can't afford. Often bearing interest rates of 15% or more, this kind of debt erodes your

ability to save and costs you dearly over time if you continue to carry a balance.

For example, if you borrowed \$1,000 at an annual interest rate of 15% to buy a new television and made monthly minimum payments, it would take more than 4½ years to pay off the debt. The \$1,000 loan would end up costing you \$1,375 with interest. You also would lose any chance to earn a positive return on the \$1,375 by saving or investing it.

## **Live With A Budget**

You can avoid such bad debt by living below your means. A detailed budget can get you on track and help you stay there. Just as dieters who keep a record of what they eat tend to lose more weight than those who don't, people who monitor their spending habits often have an easier time sticking to a budget.

Make saving a priority. One way to do this is by setting up an automatic direct-deposit plan through your bank or investment company. Ensuring the money never hits your wallet will reduce your temptation to spend it. You should also establish a financial safety net — at least 6 to 12 months' worth of expenses in an account that's easily accessible in an emergency.

A budget can help you watch expenses and divert more money to saving or paying off bills. Pack your lunch instead of eating out. Forgo the \$4 mocha latte supreme and order regular coffee. Keep your car after it's paid off rather than trading it in for the latest model — and a new set of payments. It all adds up.

## **Gain Control Of Your finances**

If you have credit card debt, you can dig yourself out. Find the card with the highest interest rate and pay as much as you can above the minimum payment each month while continuing to make minimum payments on other cards. Once the first card is paid off, divert those payments to the next most expensive card, and so on.

If possible, consolidate your cards under the most favorable interest rate available and pay as much as possible toward your monthly balance. Even a credit card is



OK if you can pay off the balance every month. You get the convenience of using a card but avoid paying interest on products such as groceries, food, entertainment and travel.

If you're in serious trouble, consider debt counseling. Reputable sources such as the National Foundation for Credit Counseling can help consolidate your debt into one monthly payment and negotiate with your creditors for lower interest rates or minimum payments.

In the end, it's all up to you. Stick to your budget and live within your means. Then you can manage your debt and not let it manage you.

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